

Practice makes perfect

Here's the view from the pilot's seat in an F-15C simulator at the Boeing-delivered and -operated Mission Training Center at Langley Air Force Base, Va. A team co-led by Boeing recently conducted an exercise that allowed pilots from different nations, flying various types of aircraft, to train simultaneously and virtually in a realistic fighting environment.

BOB FERGUSON PHOTO

Boeing helps fighter pilots worldwide train practically 'side by side'

By STACEY RITTER HOLLOWAY

This is the first time ever I was able to interact with fighters from a different country; and I am really, really impressed!"

Those words, spoken by a Royal Air Force Tornado GR4 pilot, summed up his participation in Avenging Eagle, the first ever link-up between the U.S. Distributed Mission Operations Network aircrew training system and another nation's simulation facilities. The exercise, which took place in March, was delivered through the UK Mission Training Through Distributed Simulation Capability Concept Demonstration program (MTDS CCD).

Since 1999, Boeing has been considered an industry expert in providing training in a Distributed Mission Operations environment. This capability allows U.S. Air Force pilots the means to train as they operate—in teams from around the globe, without requiring pilots to leave their home base. Today, that expertise includes providing distributed training capability to U.S. coalition teammates in the United Kingdom.

Delivered by Team ACTIVE—a team led by Boeing and British defense and security technology firm QinetiQ in partnership with the Royal Air Force, U.S. Air Force and subcontractors—Avenging Eagle provided a new capability for simulators and training centers to be networked together on the Distributed Mission Operations Network. During the exercise, pilots in five different locations across the UK, United States and Europe flew aircraft simulators linked to allow them to cohesively plan, execute and debrief the mission—all within a virtual environment.

"The more aircraft we can link, the better the opportunity to improve both British and U.S. capabilities," said Capt. Richard Ward, 390th Fighter Squadron, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho.

Simulators for European-built Tornado and Typhoon fighter/attack jets, Boeing E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, and Forward Air Control at Royal Air Force Base Waddington, UK, were linked to simulators for the Fairchild A-10 ground attack aircraft in Spandahlem, Germany; Lockheed F-16 fighter at the Air Force Research Laboratory in Mesa, Ariz.; Boeing F-15 fighter at Langley Air Force Base, Va.; and AWACS at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla.

"The MTDS program has exceeded everyone's expectations by defining and delivering training capabilities never before imagined," said Tony Jones, vice president, Boeing Training Systems and Services, a division of the Support Systems business of Integrated Defense Systems.

Within the networked simulation environment, pilots are able to fly, communicate and execute their mission just as they would in an actual aircraft, but without the weather, cost and flight-safety constraints experienced in live practice. Instructors generate realistic threats that the pilots engage and fight—all via computers.

Avenging Eagle was the last exercise under the MTDS program. Over the past 30 months, the program staged nine events, of varying complexities, that drew from a wide range of air assets and operational scenarios.

What's next for joint and coalition training? George German, Boeing manager of the MTDS CCD program, said: "We want to continue expanding the global capabilities of the network so that in addition to the UK, the air forces of multiple countries can train in one virtual environment." ■

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